



PR

5752

E6

1893

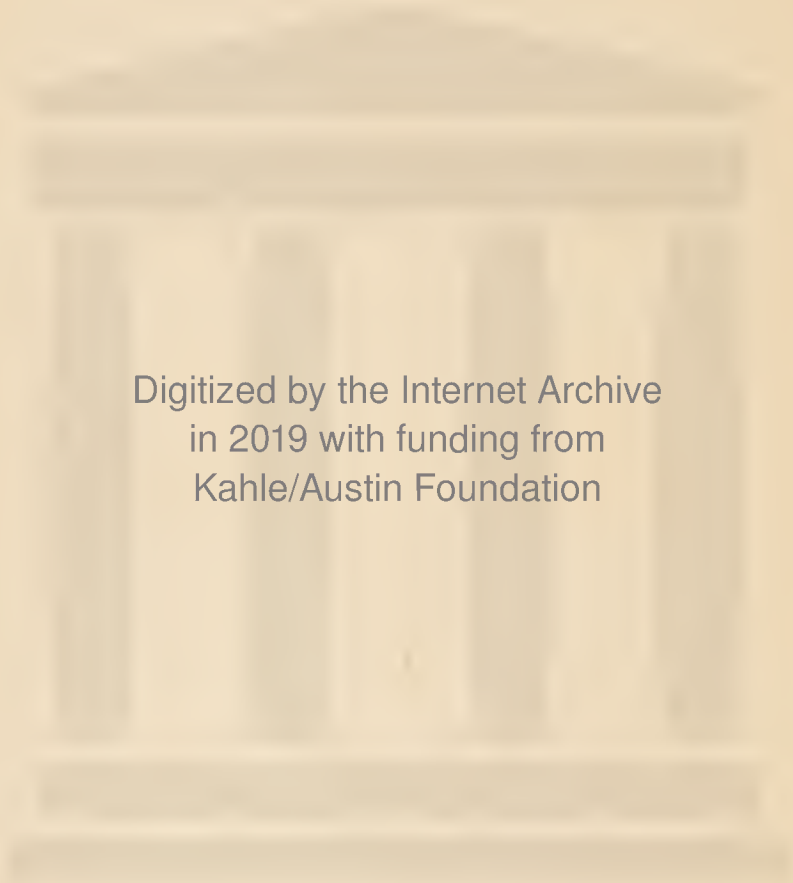
NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



TRENT UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Trent University Library

FEB 9 '68



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

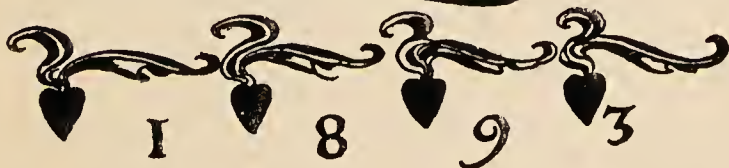
<https://archive.org/details/elopingangelscap0000wats>



THE ☆
ELOPING ANGELS:
A Caprice.
By ☆
WILLIAM WATSON.



LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS.
and JOHN LANE: Vigo Street.



PR 5752

.E6

1893

TO GRANT ALLEN an
only too generous appreciator
of my verse I dedicate this
poem knowing that he will
recognize beneath its some
what hazardous levity a spirit
not wholly flippant & such
as can alone justify its inscription
to a serious
lover of the Muse.



Written in September and October 1892.

W W

FAUST, on a day, and Mephistopheles,

In the dead season, were supremely bored.

‘What shall we do, our jaded souls to please?’

Said Faust to his Familiar and his lord.

‘All pleasures have we tasted at our ease,

All byways of all sin have we explored.

What *shall* we do, our jaded souls to please?’

‘Ah, what indeed?’ said Mephistopheles.

To whom thus Faust : ' My Mephisto, thou art
A devil of exceeding rich resource ;
Hast in thy time played every human part,
And braved the shafts of archangelic Force ;
Thou carriest lightly in thy brain a chart
Of all the worlds, and every planet's course :
Can'st not procure us, by thy wit's rare power,
Admission into heaven for half-an-hour ?

‘Thou know’st the approaches well; didst learn to scale

The starriest heights, in thy distinguished Past :

The Seraphim as comrades thou couldst hail,

And with Saint Peter an old friendship hast.

Some private influence surely would avail,

Joined with the prestige of thy name and caste.

’Twould mightily amuse me, I declare,

For once to see how wags the world up there.’

Then Mephisto : ' You vastly underrate

The hazards and the dangers, my good Sir.

Peter is stony as his name ; the gate,

Excepting to invited guests, won't stir.

'Tis long since he and I were intimate :

We differed ;—but to bygones why refer ?

However, there 's no want of windows ; you

Could get a glimpse of heaven by peeping through.'

So, on the wings of magic power, these twain

Ascended through the steep and giddy night ;

And soon this earth and all it doth contain

Shrank to a point of hesitating light,

Till, as they climbed those altitudes inane,

The battlements celestial dawned in sight,

And domes and turrets made one golden gleam

Splendid beyond all splendour born of dream.

Unto a window in the heavenly wall,
A casement open to the night, they came,
When Mephisto addressed his charge and thrall :
‘ This sort of prank, to me, is rather tame,
And my concern with Paradise is small :
My int’rests lie elsewhere ; but all the same,
You, as a stranger, might do worse than cast
A glance inside : most probably, your last.’

‘Soft!’ answered Faust, ‘I hear a voice within,

And if it be not some enamoured youth

Breathing warm words a maiden’s heart to win,

Like any mortal wooer, in good sooth

Thou’rt not the great artificer of sin,

Nor I a seeker after hidden truth.

Nay, sure enough—look!—what a charming pair!

Such eyes she has! And that auroral hair!’

Faust had not erred. These angels were indeed

Two human lovers, who, by sudden fate,
Full early from the yoke of life being freed,
Renewed their vows in that celestial state.

Now Faust, although immoral, was, I need

Hardly affirm, a gentleman. 'I hate,'
He said, 'to play the spy at scenes like this.'
So he coughed loudly on their whispering bliss.

‘ Immortal Spirits ! Beatitudes divine !

Behold,’ he said, ‘ two wanderers from that star
Whence haply ye too hail : whose glories shine
Lost in deep space, so faint and pale they are.

If ye will graciously an ear incline,

And parley with us travellers from afar,
Fain would we learn such news as may be given
Of what—in short—is going on in heaven.’

‘ Friends, for such tidings ye in vain apply
To me,’ the radiant Youth Angelic said.
We lead a life withdrawn, this maid and I,
Nor love the life by other angels led—
All idle hymns of praise to the Most High.
Our one supreme desire is to be wed,
And we were even now concerting schemes
How to escape and realise our dreams.

‘ For here in heaven no marrying is, nor yet

Giving in marriage, and we dwell debarred

From that full tie whereon our hearts are set—

An inhibition surely somewhat hard.

One only hindrance—a most serious let—

Doth still the moment of our flight retard :

To wit, this garb angelic, which on earth

Would comment cause, and haply move to mirth.’

‘No bar at all!’ quoth Mephisto the shrewd.

‘You shall change wardrobes with my friend and me.

Our earthly vesture when you have endued,—

’Tis somewhat picturesque, as you may see,—

Across the interstellar solitude

Safely to earth (dear planet!) you shall flee.

You have my blessing, both of you. And now

We will effect the exchange, if you’ll allow.’

Merely to will, when spirit with spirit deals,
Is to perform. The bargain once being made,
Faust, in a thought, appears from head to heels
Clad in the garments of the angel-maid,
She in his own ; the devil quite pious feels,
In garb of heaven becomingly arrayed ;
While the Bright Lover clothes divine desire
In most unhallowed and unblest attire.

So Faust and his companion entered, by

The window, the abodes where seraphs dwell.

‘Already morning quickens in the sky,

And soon will sound the heavenly matin-bell ;

Our time is short,’ said Mephisto, ‘for I

Have an appointment about noon in hell.

Dear, dear ! why, heaven has hardly changed one bit

Since the old days before the historic split.’

But leave we now this enterprising pair,

Faust the explorer, Mephisto the guide,

And follow yon bright fugitives in their

Ethereal journey whither mortals bide.

Across the wastes of space and fields of air

Tireless they sped, and soon this orb descried,

Hung like a fairy lamp with timid gleam

From the great branches of the Solar Scheme.

She, on the earth, a village girl, and he

A prince had been. 'Twas pure romance of love,
Idyllic and ideal as could be,

All policy and prudence far above.

And when he fell in glorious battle, she

Could not survive him, poor, white, mateless dove !
And now on earth they stepped once more, and met
The ghosts of old dead kisses deathless yet.

'Twas morn. The lark was making for the sky

The ploughman was returning to his plough.

'Unto my father's palace we will fly,'

Said the angelic Prince. 'Another, now,

Sits on his throne, but loyally will I

Serve him, and gladly to his sceptre bow ;

And us, I doubt not, he will entertain,

And cheerly bid us welcome home again.'

So, to the royal palace having flown,
And in no form or due observance failed,
With mien of homage they approached the throne ;
But the poor craven king in terror quailed,
Shrieking : ‘ More spectres ! Out, ye sprites, begone !
Have all my exorcists not yet availed
To rid me of these ghostly plagues that make
Life dreadful, if I sleep or if I wake ? ’

Then, with sad eyes compassionate, the twain

Faded from out the presence, nothing loth

The presence of the fields and skies to gain.

And she, the queen of his rich love and troth,

Spake very softly : ‘ Dearest, wilt thou deign

To seek my father’s cottage, where for both

Shall room and welcome be ? for he doth own

A heart more royal than thy kinsman’s throne.’

Unto her father's cot they took their way.

They found him leaning on his gate, white-haired,
Full of the memory of a former day.

Calmly he greeted them, like one prepared
For loftiest visitants, as who should say :

‘ My son and daughter, that so far have fared,
I have awaited you this many a year.
Enter and rest, my son and daughter dear.’

And entering in, they veiled their heavenly sheen

In homely vesture, and themselves resigned

To homely tasks. A milkmaid or a queen,

Her had you deemed : an emperor him, or hind.

Of port majestic, yet of humblest mien—

Immortals, thrilled with touch of mortal kind—

To notes of earth they gave a sphery tone,

And knit the hearts of all things with their own.

So there they stayed, and to the neighbours few

The story of their earthward flight revealed ;

And more than paradisal bliss they drew

From the familiar life of hearth and field.

Content with pleasures which the lowliest knew,

The wealth which all things unto all things yield,

They vowed that nought should ever them decoy

Back to their selfish heaven of unearned joy.

Yet theirs were many griefs, for evermore

They made the pangs of other hearts their own,
Feeling all pain they saw ; and thus they bore

The burden of the universal moan,
Wept with all tears, and with all wounds were sore.

But likewise all the joy by others known
Became their joy ; and in the world-wide scale,
Pleasure, they found, o'er pain did still prevail.

So, on the earth, as angels they remained,
Yet more than angels, being lovers too ;
All their celestial loveliness retained,
And evermore in earthly sweetness grew.
Thus lost they nothing of divine, and gained
Everything human save what men must rue,
Uniting all below with all above,
Linking the stars and flowers in perfect love.

But being deathless, ever 'twas their doom,

Loving their fellows, to lament them dead.

Age after age, they saw the opening tomb,

And saw it close upon a comrade's head.

Yet what the grave took from them, that the womb

Gave back ; ' for death is but a form,' they said,

' Birth a convention : nought is less or more ;

And nature but reclaimeth to restore.'

And still they tarry. I have met them oft,
With their pure voices and caressing eyes.
You hear the rustle of their raiment soft,
And, looking up, behold with no surprise
The coronal they never yet have doffed,
The lucid aureole worn in Paradise :
Nor can you marvel that they never cared
For joys which only idle angels shared.

* * * * *

‘I think,’ said Faust—himself and Mephisto

Had just returned from their ethereal jaunt—

‘This earth is still the nicest place I know.

It always teases me when people flaunt

Their own superior bliss before me, so

Aggressively, as in that sinless haunt

Where we have just been privileged to see

The dulness of entire felicity.

‘ And then, their bliss itself—no objects new
 Tempting the soul for ever forth to press !
One goal attained, another half in view,
 One riddle solved, another still to guess,
Something subdued, and something to subdue,
 Are the conditions of our happiness.
I know no harsher ordinance of fate
Than the stagnation of your perfect state.’

‘All which,’ said Mephisto, ‘I’ve heard before.

Well, you and I no risk need apprehend
Of being stranded on that tedious shore.

From all such perils we are safe, my friend,
So make yourself quite easy on that score,

And your great mind to other matters bend.
Meanwhile, old fellow, Earth for you and me!
(*Aside.*) How he will take to *my* place, we shall see.’

EDINBURGH : T. and A. CONSTABLE
Printers to Her Majesty



LONDON, VIGO STREET, W.
1893.

ELKIN MATHEWS & JOHN LANE'S
List of New and Forthcoming Books

WATSON (WILLIAM) THE ELOPING ANGELS: A CAPRICE.

Title-page and Cover designed by WARRINGTON HOGG.
Square 16mo, 3s. 6d. net, uniform with the Author's volume
'Epigrams.'

Also 250 copies L. P., on Dickinson's hand-made paper, Imperial 16mo,
7s. 6d. net, and 75 copies on Japanese vellum, 50 of which are for
sale, 15s. net.

WATSON (WILLIAM) EXCURSIONS IN CRITICISM: being
some Prose Recreations of a Rhymer. Fcap. 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., on hand-made paper, 12s. 6d. net. [All sold.]

WATSON (WILLIAM) THE PRINCE'S QUEST, AND OTHER
POEMS. Second Edition. Crown 8vo, 4s. 6d. net.

* * Uniform with the Author's 'Poems.' (Macmillans.)

WEDMORE (FREDERICK) RENUNCIATIONS. (A Chemist in the Suburbs—A Confidence at the Savile—The North Coast and Eleanor.) Post 8vo, 3s. 6d. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., 10s. 6d. net.

WILDE (OSCAR) SALOMÉ: DRAME EN UN ACTE. First Edition limited to 600 copies (500 of which are for Sale) for Paris and London. 8vo, 5s. net.

* * 'Salomé' has been accepted by Madame Bernhardt, but, as is well known, the Lord Chamberlain refused the licence.

NOBLE (J. ASHCROFT) THE SONNET IN ENGLAND, AND OTHER ESSAYS. Title-page and Cover designed by AUSTIN YOUNG. Small 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., Dickinson hand-made, 12s. 6d. net.

DAVIDSON (JOHN) FLEET STREET ECLOGUES.

[In preparation.]

SYMONDS (JOHN ADDINGTON) IN THE KEY OF BLUE, AND OTHER PROSE ESSAYS. With Cover (blue-bells and laurel) specially designed by C. S. RICKETTS. Crown 8vo, 8s. 6d. net.

Also 50 copies on Dickinson hand-made paper, £1, 1s. net. *[All sold.]*

NETTLESHIP (J. T.) ROBERT BROWNING: ESSAYS AND
THOUGHTS. Second Edition. Crown 8vo, 7s. 6d.

SCOTT (WILLIAM BELL) A POET'S HARVEST HOME,
with an AFTERMATH. Post 12mo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies on Japanese vellum, 12s. 6d. net.

HAZLITT (WILLIAM) LIBER AMORIS; OR, THE NEW
PYGMALION. With an Introduction by RICHARD LE
GALLIENNE. 12mo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., on Arnold hand-made paper, 12s. 6d. net.

LE GALLIENNE (RICHARD) ENGLISH POEMS. Second
Edition, 12mo, 5s. net. [*Large Paper copies all sold.*]

LE GALLIENNE (RICHARD) GEORGE MEREDITH: SOME
CHARACTERISTICS. With a Bibliography by JOHN LANE.
Third Edition, Crown 8vo, 5s. 6d. net.

LE GALLIENNE (RICHARD) THE RELIGION OF A LITER-
ARY MAN. 12mo, 3s. 6d. net, and a limited edition on
hand-made paper, 10s. 6d. net. [*In preparation.*]

HALLAM (ARTHUR) POEMS OF. Reprinted from the scarce 'Remains in Verse and Prose,' 1834. Also his critique from the 'Englishman's Magazine,' 1831, 'On some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry and on the Lyrical Poems of ALFRED TENNYSON.' With an Introductory Note by RICHARD LE GALLIENNE. Small 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies on hand-made paper, 12s. 6d. net.

DE GRUCHY (AUGUSTA) UNDER THE HAWTHORN, AND OTHER VERSES. With Frontispiece by WALTER CRANE. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 30 copies on Japanese vellum, 15s. net.

GRAY (JOHN) SILVERPOINTS (POEMS). Printed in Italics. With Ornaments by C. S. RICKETTS. Long 12mo, 7s. 6d. net.

Also 25 copies L. P., on hand-made paper. Bound in English vellum, £1, 1s. net.

VAN DYKE (HENRY) THE POETRY OF TENNYSON. Third Edition, enlarged and revised. Crown 8vo, 5s. 6d. net.

The additions consist of a portrait, two extra chapters, and the Chronology expanded. The Laureate himself gave valuable aid in the correction of various details.

IMAGE (SELWYN) POEMS. With decorations by HERBERT PERCY HORNE. 12mo, 5s. net.

DE TABLEY (LORD) POEMS DRAMATIC AND LYRICAL.
By JOHN LEICESTER WARREN, LORD DE TABLEY, M.A.,
F.S.A. With 5 Illustrations, and Cover (Rose-petals)
designed by C. S. RICKETTS, and Book-plate by W. BELL
SCOTT. Crown 8vo, 7s. 6d. net. A limited number on
Japanese paper.

JOHNSON (LIONEL) THE ART OF THOMAS HARDY: SIX
ESSAYS. With Etched Portrait from Life by WILLIAM
STRANG, and a Bibliography by JOHN LANE. Crown 8vo,
5s. net.

Also a limited number on Large Paper, £1, 1s. net.

MEYNELL (MRS.) THE RHYTHM OF LIFE, AND OTHER
ESSAYS. Fcap. 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., on hand-made paper, 12s. 6d. net.

MEYNELL (MRS.) POEMS. Fcap. 8vo, 5s. net.

Also 50 copies L. P., on hand-made paper.

WICKSTEED (P. H.) DANTE: SIX SERMONS. Third
Edition, much improved. Crown 8vo, 2s. net.

FIELD (MICHAEL) STEPHANIA: A TRIALOGUE, IN THREE
ACTS. Frontispiece, Colophon, and Ornament for binding
designed by SELWYN IMAGE. Pott 4to, 6s. net.

FIELD (MICHAEL) SIGHT AND SONG. (Poems on Pictures.)
12mo, 5s. net. (Very few remain.)

HAMILTON (COL. IAN, V.C.) THE BALLAD OF HADJI,
AND OTHER POEMS. Etched Frontispiece by WILLIAM
STRANG. 12mo, 3s. net.

BROTHERS IN SONG. (POEMS.) By RICHARD LE
GALLIENNE, NORMAN GALE, and A. HAYES. Printed
at the Rugby Press on hand-made paper, Small 8vo,
300 copies, 10s. 6d. net ; 50 Large paper, £1, 10s. net.

The Hobby Horse

A new series of this illustrated magazine will be published quarterly by subscription, commencing January 1893, under the Editorship of Herbert P. Horne. Subscription £1 per annum, post free, for the four numbers, beginning with the January number of each year. Quarto, printed on hand-made paper, and issued in a limited edition to subscribers only. The Magazine will contain articles upon Literature, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts; Poems; Essays; Fiction; original Designs; with reproductions of pictures and drawings by the old masters and contemporary artists. There will be a new title-page and ornaments designed by the Editor.

Among the contributors to the
Hobby Horse are :

THE LATE MATTHEW ARNOLD.
LAWRENCE BINYON.
WILFRID BLUNT.
FORD MADOX BROWN.
THE LATE ARTHUR BURGESS.
E. BURNE-JONES, A.R.A.
AUSTIN DOBSON.
RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D.
A. J. HIPKINS, F.S.A.
SELWYN IMAGE.
LIONEL JOHNSON.
RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.
SIR F. LEIGHTON, Bart., P.R.A.
T. HOPE McLACHLAN.
MAY MORRIS.
C. HUBERT H. PARRY, Mus. Doc.
A. W. POLLARD.

F. YORK POWELL.
CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.
W. M. ROSSETTI.
JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.
FREDERICK SANDYS.
W. BELL SCOTT.
FREDERICK J. SHIELDS.
J. H. SHORTHOUSE.
JAMES SMETHAM.
SIMEON SOLOMON.
A. SOMERVELL.
J. ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
KATHARINE TYNAN.
G. F. WATTS, R.A.
FREDERICK WEDMORE.
OSCAR WILDE.
ETC. ETC.

THE BODLEY HEAD, VIGO STREET, LONDON, W.

93

Date Due

JUL 06 1995

JUN 27 1995



PR 5752 .E6 1893

Watson, William, Sir, 185

The eloping angels, a caprice.

010101 000



0 1999 0015067 3

TRENT UNIVERSITY

PR5752 .E6 1893

Watson, Sir William

The eloping angels.

83633

